

# Managers: Your Strongest (or Weakest) Link in Driving Employee Engagement?

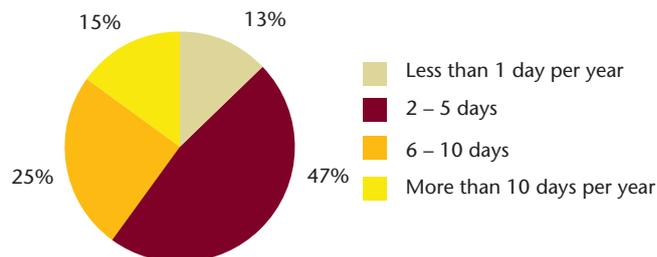
## Employers must take action to motivate and equip their managers to act on engagement surveys

Data from Aon Hewitt's European Engagement database shows that the vast majority of employees across Europe believe that their employers view engagement as a tick box exercise, with only 18% of employees strongly believing that survey results will be acted upon.

To gain a better understanding of the role that managers could and should play in acting on engagement, Aon Hewitt ran a European research project in June 2011, which canvassed the views of more than 700 managers across 10 European countries, resulting in the report "Managers: Your Strongest (or Weakest) Link in Driving Employee Engagement?".

The report shows nearly half (47%) of managers indicated that they spend only two to five days a year on activities relating to their annual engagement survey.

*As a manager, how much time do you spend on average each year on encouraging employee survey participation, interpreting results and taking action?*



Source: Aon Hewitt European Manager Survey 2011

### Did you know?

- The more engaged your managers are, the more time and effort they will be willing to spend on engaging their teams;
- Managers who have been set clear expectations regarding their role in engaging employees are more likely to take action: 75% vs. 45%;
- Three-quarters of managers will take action, if they receive sufficient support from HR and see senior leadership set a positive example;
- Managers who have seen evidence that engagement drives business results are much more likely to build action plans: 71% of them do not stop after reviewing the results but actively work on improving engagement too.

## Engagement builds engagement

Our research confirmed organisations with a strong engagement culture were much more successful at transforming employee surveys into actions. For example, managers who reviewed their survey results and identified actions had an overall engagement score of 63%, versus 27% for managers who had access to results but did not even review them.

Furthermore, Aon Hewitt Best Employers Study (an annually updated global database) shows that organisations which are considered most successful in terms of financial performance and strong levels of engagement are more likely to empower their managers to provide their team members with the support they need: 75% versus 60% in other organisations.

## Strengthening the middle manager link

We have recently seen an increasing number of organisations with middle managers who are less engaged than the employees they are managing. In these organisations managers often feel under pressure from both upper and lower organisational levels and are frequently asked to do more with fewer resources. In such situations it can only be a matter of time before the engagement levels of team members are negatively impacted by their disengaged managers.

Our survey highlights a number of key principles when strengthening the role of middle managers, including the following:

- Only engaged leaders and managers can create engaged teams;
- Managers need to have been set clear expectations regarding their role in engaging employees;
- Managers need support in the form of role models from senior management, but also access to tools and experienced HR advice;
- Managers are more likely to take action on engagement when they have seen the hard evidence of the impact it has on performance.

Another step towards increasing manager involvement is an open and honest conversation at all levels of the organisation, and that starts with sharing the survey results. We were encouraged to see that almost all managers responding to research are receiving results – for the overall company, their team or both.

The level of access to results makes a huge difference to the likelihood of managers acting on survey outcomes. Of managers who received both types of results, 81% identified actions, while only 54-58% of those who received only team or only organisational level results did the same.



### Practical steps to strengthen the link

**Review** current levels of leader and manager engagement and identify any hot-spots where targeted action may need to be taken.

**Ensure** that your engagement survey results and the follow-up process are designed to encourage managers to focus on priority actions.

**Ensure** any manager training or induction programmes cover the topic of employee engagement.

**Create** manager forums and communities where engagement ideas can be shared and managers feel supported and part of the organisation's drive to create an engaged workforce.

**Make** full use of technology to make it easier for managers to find everything they need to act on engagement and implement actions.

**Communicate** success stories and promote internal case studies showing how manager behaviours and actions have been proven to make a difference to levels of employee engagement.

**Establish** the links between employee engagement and key performance metrics in your organisation so that managers see tangible evidence of the impact of having an engaged team.

**Identify** what your organisation's 'Engaging Leader DNA' should be, establish where your greatest gaps are at an organisational and individual manager level and create development plans to close these gaps.

#### Contact

Jenny Merry  
+44 (0)172 788 8395  
jenny.merry@aonhewitt.com

Jake Outram  
+44 (0)207 086 9234  
jake.outram@aonhewitt.com

Hugh Hawthorne  
+44 (0)207 086 9131  
hugh.hawthorne@aonhewitt.com

Jessica Everitt  
+44 (0)207 086 9339  
jessica.everitt@aonhewitt.com

aonhewitt.com

#### About the European Manager Survey 2011

The results are based on a survey of 731 managers across Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The survey was performed in June 2011.

#### About Aon Hewitt

Aon Hewitt is the global leader in human capital consulting and outsourcing solutions. We design, implement, communicate, and administer a wide range of human capital, retirement, investment management, health care, compensation and talent management strategies. With more than 29,000 professionals in 90 countries, Aon Hewitt makes the world a better place to work for clients and their employees. [www.aonhewitt.com](http://www.aonhewitt.com)